1: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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law to avoid her father-in-law, another informant said: 'It is forbidden to look at fathers-in-law. If we do look then we shall not die well, we shall long to die and not be able to do so, because both those below (the dead) and those above (the living) are angry. Yes, it is the witches we mean when we say "those above".'

c. *The age-village and medicines*

Unlike the belief in witchcraft and 'the breath of men', which mainly affects relationships within a village, or the ancestor cult which is confined to the relations between kinsmen, and between chief and people, the use of medicines (*imikota*)[1] enters into every type of relationship in Nyakyusa society. Medicines are employed to win success in almost every undertaking: cultivating, herding, hunting, love-making, war. They are regarded as one of the main props of authority; the impressiveness (*ubusisya*) of a chief, and the power of a village headman to command, being directly related to the medicines with which they are treated (*vide supra*, pp. 24–5). They are resorted to for the promotion of fertility, for the treatment of the sick, and for protection and retaliation generally, as well as the means of directly harming an enemy. Medicines are believed to operate along with other mystical powers. For example, they are an essential element in rituals directed to the ancestors, and they are used for the discovery of witchcraft (in the ordeal) as well as for protection against it, and for the treatment of patients thought to have been 'eaten' by the witches or chilled by 'the breath of men'. Used alone, medicines are held to be ineffective against witchcraft or 'the breath of men', but they are regarded as a useful complement to other action, such as the banishment of the witch or the repentance of the sinner.

The power of witchcraft or of defence against witches (*amanga*) is connected with medicines, for it is thought often to be acquired for defensive purposes (and more rarely for aggressive purposes) through drinking medicines (*vide* pp. 25, 221). But the powers of witchcraft, or witch defence, and of medicines are quite distinct; the one implies a peculiar physical condition, the presence of one or more pythons in the belly, whereas the other may be bought from a doctor and used by anyone, and its

[1] The root *-kota* implies something derived from a plant. cf. *iki-kota*, a wooden stool.

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efficacy neither depends upon nor affects the user's anatomy. The creation and control of wild animals, for example, is thought to turn on knowing the right medicines, not on any innate power, and is not therefore classed as witchcraft.

The Nyakyusa hold that just as 'python power' may be put to good or evil use, so also medicines may be employed legally or illegally. Particular techniques are not in themselves either good or bad; their morality turns on the purpose which they serve. Thus our friend and neighbour, Mwakionde, who was believed to have created four lions, which were roaming the neighbourhood, by placing certain bundles of twigs in the long grass, was regarded as a benefactor; for the lions had attacked neither men nor cattle, and besides adding dignity (*ubusisya*) to the country were killing the wild pig, which had been destroying the gardens. But a certain X— was driven out of Mwaijande's country because he was alleged to have created leopards which had killed children and cows. 'In 1926 X— was notorious for making leopards. It was said that he got a medicine from Misuku to make them. His neighbours feared to quarrel with him for in that year leopards infested the whole of Selya, especially the country of Mwaijande. It was said that if one quarrelled with this man one's child would be killed by leopards the following day. He was notorious. Once he quarrelled with a neighbour, saying: "Your cattle are eating my food." Then the following day the child of that man was taken by a leopard. The chief drove X— out. When they questioned him he denied having familiars ("animals") but the chief said: "Move from my country, for your animals are destroying this country." He said: "Chief, give me the ordeal." The chief refused, saying: "No! get out of my country." So he moved. Now he is back in the country of Mwaijande. He returned to the place from which he had moved.'[1]

Not all medicines believed to cause sickness and death are illegal; there are many retaliatory medicines which are believed only to harm the evil-doer, e.g. the thief, the adulterer, or the eater of stolen food; and the use of these 'medicines of ownership' (*ifilembeko*) is considered quite legitimate. A man gives his wives medicines to drink (without their knowledge) and then any lover who may sleep with them will, it is said, contract disease in

[1] In another context this man was spoken of as a witch (*undoni*), cf. Document, p. 252.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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house. Then she goes in and steals a piece of firewood from the loft[1] and runs off with it, laughing. The officiant pursues her and makes her drop it and gives her medicine, while the company cry: 'A thief, a thief!' She takes the firewood back to her husband's home. 'It is a sign that she has entered her father's house, just as the spear is a sign that she has entered the house of another husband.' In rich families the new husband sends a bull which is killed and eaten at the ritual.

Our informants were agreed that 'there is no fear of the gasping cough if a woman runs away from her husband and goes to a lover', and in practice no ritual is performed when she visits her father after divorce and re-marriage, but it is perhaps significant that such a situation could scarcely have arisen in the past, since divorce by agreement rarely, if ever, occurred. An adulterer fled, if he could, with his lover to another chiefdom, breaking off all relations with her kin.

(*b*) *The overt purpose and symbolism*

Now we turn to the Kukwe interpretation of events. Our two principal informants here were Mwasalemba, an elderly pagan man, brother to the chief Porokoto, whose wife, Syungu, acted as officiant at rituals in the chief's family, and Kakune, a young doctor who had learnt the medicines from his mother. Mwasalemba was much more coherent than Syungu herself, and his interpretation was confirmed by Kakune and numerous other informants. Again I give the interpretation of the two principal informants without any editing other than placing consecutively statements made on different occasions.

i. *Mwasalemba's interpretation.* (Recorded by G. W. and translated by him soon afterwards.)

MWASALEMBA: Perhaps a youth, perhaps a girl, runs mad; he runs about naked so that we say: 'He's mad, why doesn't he cover himself?' He goes to the place of defaecation and takes filth and eats it: he goes into people's houses and takes things, he might even take some things from you, from a European, without fear; he knows not what he does. Sometimes, after a visit to a doctor, he recovers altogether and never has the fit again—that is the lesser kind of madness. But sometimes he recovers and then the fit takes him again later—that is the more serious

[1] The loft (*pijula*) consists of horizontal beams running at wall level across a portion of the hut. Here every married woman keeps a supply of dry firewood. It is her private store-place which may not be touched without her permission.

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158 kind. We take such a one [either type] to a doctor, tying a rope round
757 his waist on the way. For if we leave him free he goes and drowns himself in the lake. So then the doctor says 'His heart has suddenly turned over', and gives him a powdered medicine to eat from a bark-cloth. Then when he has eaten the medicine the doctor puts a finger at the back of his tongue to make him vomit, again and again. So then the filth comes out of him. Then the doctor says: 'Don't eat meat or fish until I give you other medicine later.' Then he ties some of the same medicine in two bark-cloths and ties one round his neck, one round his loins. . . .

158 Sometimes a man in the mad fit finds a woman, then he takes the
684 leaves off his waist, catches hold of her and, forcing her to the ground, has intercourse with her. Then when the woman returns home she complains that a man in the mad fit has caught and raped her. Then her husband says: 'Well, it's all over now. If he'd been in normal health I'd have sued him for a cow for adultery before the chief, but seeing he is mad there's no point in my doing so, it's all over now!' . . .

158 Sometimes madness comes by itself, although no ritual has been
775 omitted, sometimes because they have not performed a ritual. The symptoms of the two kinds are exactly the same, their cause is different. The one connected with ritual comes because the shades are angry: 'Why have you left that child untreated, without putting stones on its head . . . ? It seems it is of no account.' And then the child goes mad.

757 When madness comes of itself the doctor takes the patient to a
755 waterfall and lets the water tumble on his head; then he makes him vomit, and the vomit is carried away in the water. But that which comes from ritual they don't treat in this way; they make him vomit at home, and then perform the ritual for him.

158 Sometimes madness brings visions (*injozi*)—the man lets everything
787 come in his speech and says of people: 'What sort are they? They are witches!' And if there is a gathering he speaks out: 'You are a witch—you bewitch your neighbour's cows!' So then people ask what he means by letting everything come in his speech like this, and they are told he has the mad fit on him. The madness gives him power to see the witches, he sees them surely. And of old if a madman with the fit on
[683] him accused you of witchcraft you would go at once to drink the ordeal. And if the ordeal accused you too then your house was burnt over you!

764 QUESTION: Why the washing and eating porridge?
MWASALEMBA: If we don't do this then the children will vomit a watery fluid.

I put a direct question to him about the sausages of porridge and he admitted with a smile, rather an embarrassed one: 'Yes, well, you have understood it; yes, it is a symbol of eating excrement . . . we do it at night.'

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the wife of Mpoma, but about this I do not know much. When they stopped speaking Kanyamale was ill. Then her husband charged her with witchcraft and she said: 'What is the case about? I have been ill since we came from confessing anger.' Then Kanyamale grew sulky and gathered up her mats and went with them to her child's place. Mpoma said: 'I must follow her,' but his fellows soothed him and he turned back. Then he borrowed a spear from his fellows and went to drive off the game which were eating his crops. When he found no animals he went home. On his return, when he was still outside, he heard the wives whispering about some case. He asked them to open the door for him, but they were silent and did not open the door of the hut. Then he pushed it open. When he entered the hut he closed it and he cross-examined the wives, asking what they were talking about. One said: 'I was just asleep.' He said: 'With whom were you speaking? You are hiding a man in this house.' One woman got up immediately and opened the door. Mpoma cross-examined them hotly. He said: 'Why did you open the door if indeed there is no man in the hut?' Mpoma got in a passion and went elsewhere. He returned again and said: 'Marry the child. I will not destroy him,' and he went away alone. He took the case to Mwakisisya, the village headman, and lost it. Then the court said: 'You get the children. Let them come here, though their mother is not here.'

Later on it was like this: Mwakionde went to attend to the medicines to give to the sick man to drink; they began by putting powdered medicines in a pot, then they put in some water, then they put in three sorts of powdered medicine, one black and two red. Mwakionde, because he was the doctor, began; he put in the water first. Mpoma, the senior, followed him, then all the others. When the water boiled, they stirred up porridge with a spoon, then they gave the sick man some to drink, and the relatives drank. If there were one who was working sorcery against his fellows, he would die when he drank that medicine. But the sick man, before he drank this medicine, drank something else. When the water boiled, they mixed a medicine and scarified themselves all over their bodies.

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is finished; then the host will offer a greeting, but no further conversation takes place until all the milking is over. Even his wife will not talk to a man milking. And women themselves do not milk as a rule. I was once called to see an old woman who had been terribly mauled by an enraged cow, which she had attempted to milk during her husband's illness. What enraged the cow I do not know, but the Konde believe that it was the sex of the milker, though men also are sometimes injured by enraged animals, usually a cow suckling her first calf.

Milk that is not drunk fresh is put into large pots, and the milk of five to ten days added day by day. It is covered over very carefully, and eaten, when thick, along with potatoes, bananas, or other food. The whey, which is poured off when the pot is full, is also drunk for its cathartic properties. The pots, of which a family with a large herd may have up to ten, are thoroughly cleansed after use with boiling water, and then laid on the fire for perfect disinfection. Sometimes the milk is further hardened by being allowed to drip from a closely woven basket for several days, when it becomes hard and slightly tough, with a flavour like that of milk cheese.

I have more than once proved the sustaining qualities and pleasant taste of thick milk prepared in the Konde fashion. On one occasion I was separated from my carriers, and, about two in the afternoon, having tramped since six in the morning, I stumbled into a village, and dropped exhausted under a great spreading tree. The chief, observing my exhausted condi-

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CHAPTER XXII

Sickness & Medicine

THE Konde possess a surprisingly wide knowledge of the uses of herbs. I have in my possession a collection of over a hundred specimens of leaves and roots, brought to me by the doctors who used them, and who described to me the disease for which each was a cure, and the manner of applying the drug. Knowledge of these plants is handed down from generation to generation. In a prayer to be given presently, the doctor pleads that he has not departed from the knowledge of his ancestors, as a reason why he should be assisted now; an attitude which is not, perhaps, a guarantee of progress, but certainly is a guarantee of honesty. The knowledge is quite real so far as it goes. I was myself in 1912 cured instantaneously of a raging toothache by an old native doctor, and two years passed before the trouble returned. The old man boiled in water some rootlets of a tree which grows in the neighbourhood, and the liquid, when cool, was applied to the tooth with a leaf, when the pain vanished as by magic. A few years later another doctor undertook to cure me of a severe attack of neuritis, but I preferred the attentions of a European doctor; a decision which I

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have often regretted, not because the European did not cure me, but because I missed an opportunity of testing the native. 757

A European well known in the country told me recently that in 1901 he was cured of black-water fever by a native doctor on the Zambesi. Water boiled with roasted rice was given him in large quantities, and a small sack, filled with boiled leaves of a tree not known to me, was bound around the abdomen. His recovery was rapid, and he has himself successfully used the same cure in other cases. Another European was cured of persistent dysentery by an old native doctor.

Doubtless there is much pretence; drugs are administered without real knowledge; but in the main the doctors are honourable men, fulfilling an important place in the life of the community, relieving much pain, and achieving striking successes, which are too well authenticated to admit of doubt. That in many cases they ruin the patient for life, is unfortunately also only too true. But however that may be, they have not forfeited the confidence of the people. The advent of the scientifically trained European doctor has diminished indeed, but by no means destroyed, the influence of his African confrère in science. Hundreds still consult the native doctor, many in preference to, and not a few after having tried, the white man's medicine. A medical friend of mine tells a good story against himself. He was asked by one of his own employees for the loan of two shillings; but the applicant was most unwilling to tell what the 759

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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759 money was to be used for. It came out, however, that it was to pay a native doctor, to whom he was taking his wife for consultation! The native's fee was two shillings. The fee at the dispensary would not have been one-tenth of that sum, but the patient preferred the high fee and the unqualified adviser. Nor is this surprising, when it is remembered that so much of the troubles which afflict the native, are believed to be due to the interference of spirits, with which the European doctor will have nothing to do; while the Konde doctor will consult them as part at least, if not the whole, of his diagnosis. Hence the confidence in him. He is in touch with the sources of the trouble.

759 And this same conviction, that the native doctors
789 are in touch with the sources of the trouble, leads to some of the most foolish beliefs of the common people, and of the most mischievous practices of the doctors. It is the source of the absurd confidence in the power of medicine to turn bullets into water, for example. In 1897 medicine was prepared which would cause the white man, in what was then the Neu Langenburg area, to disappear. It is believed by many natives with whom I have been in touch, that some doctors are seeking for a " formula " to-day, which will succeed where the previous one so obviously failed; suggestive of a state of mind similar perhaps to that of our own alchemists of centuries ago; but suggestive also of a desire, at least in some quarters, to see the last of the white man.

757 Both the gathering of herbs, and the administration
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3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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of the medicine, is a religious act. Mwenekasangamara, the doctor referred to in the previous chapter, used the following prayer, when gathering herbs; it was given to me by his son, who got it from his father. And Mwenekasangamara claimed that it had descended through many generations in his family.

> "Be merciful to me, thou Creator. The medicine which I am seeking is the same that my fathers sought, and it was Thou that didst open their eyes. Show me the roots, and I shall know them. But if my patient is not to recover, hide them from me, and I shall know that it is Thy will."

The following, used when medicine is being administered in a case of ulcer that has resisted treatment, is rather a statement than a prayer:

> "If this disease has come from God, medicine will heal it; for God, who made us, made also the trees, and gave us intelligence to know their properties. But if it has come from men, I cannot heal it."

The last sentence means that witchcraft or the anger of a spirit is at the root of the trouble, and steps must be taken to discover the facts. Then, but only then, the ulcer will yield to treatment.

But behind both the prayer and the medicine, or at any rate in addition to them, there is something else. There are certain medicines which are never administered to patients; their function is to give power to the doctor himself; administered to a

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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the plant. *Ipingu* is sadness, or anger. The parents or relatives of an absent friend, having no news of him for some time, give way to grief or anger, and the emotion causes illness in the absent one. The latter goes to the diviner to learn why he is ill, and is told. The leaves of a plant called *inyekenyeke* are pounded and boiled in water, and the infusion drunk, the patient saying in the presence of the doctor :

> " Let the words of those people fall back upon them. I have spoken no evil ; I am not a hard man. God and the spirits behold me. May I get sleep."

Minyenya is nightmare. The actual meaning of the word is *ancestors*, and the bad dreams are due to their action. It is cured by an infusion of the plant *kateteya*, taken while repeating the incantation : " We drive you away, you who trouble us. Leave our friend that he may sleep." *Amahelu* is disobedience to parents or relatives. Take the fruit of *imbangala* and *munyu*, and add the flesh of the fish *ingumba ;* reduce to a powder, and mix with beer in a small calabash. This the disobedient one is forced to drink three or four times, nothing being left in the calabash. I have no doubt at all that most children find obedience less obnoxious than the mixture. Similar success attends the use of a drug made from the *mulombwa* tree. The *kasoka* is a tiny creature which covers itself with scraps of grass, and moves by using its head as a lever. It is a sovereign remedy, when mixed with other drugs, for madness, as well as for that form of madness which

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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828 makes a woman unfaithful to her husband. For *impulamutu*, a brain trouble which makes the sufferer 757 strike his head against trees or other hard objects, 278 there is a cure, but I have not discovered what it is. For dizziness, an infusion is made from the roots of the *kalemerera* plant, and the patient first drinks, then washes his face with, the infusion. Epilepsy is treated with a mixture made from the roots and leaves of many plants. The mouth is forced open if necessary when the drink is being administered. Natives assert that cures are effected, but I know of no cases that have been cured.

757 There is no disease more common among the Bantu peoples than ulcers, sores, abscesses. The 278 common *kironda* is treated with a wash made from the infusion of pounded *burungo* leaves. If it does not yield to treatment, it is due to witchcraft or spirits, and in either case the necessary preliminaries must be gone through. A special form of this disease is found when the ulcers break out on the breast or in the mouth. The diseased part is washed with an infusion of *indobo* bark, and another infusion is taken internally twice a day for a few days. A more malignant form is called *ndoroka*, for which the leaves of the plant *kanga* are infused, and applied as for *kironda*, with the same ceremonies, if a cure is not effected within a reasonable time. *Mpenga* is a slightly different form of *ndoroka*. *Kabimba* is something of the nature of an inside tumour which must be let out. Roots of the *tubimba* shrub are reduced to a dry powder, spread on the leaf of the *untugutu* tree, and bound to

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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the place with a cord made from fibre of *kabumbu*; in about ten minutes the swelling will burst and the matter escape. The same results follow from binding the place with cord made from *unguluka* shrub. Gourds are often used instead of leaves, and are tied on with cords passing through holes bored in the sides of the gourd. For syphilis (*kaswendi*) the roots of the *indabi* shrub are infused and drunk, and a powder made from *indobo* shrub is rubbed into the wounds or sores.

Kitasya is intussusception of the bowels, found mostly in children, and usually fatal. When one child after another in a family dies, an examination is made of the bowels, bamboo knives being used for the operation. If *kitasya* is indicated, the parents drink an infusion made from the leaves of a creeper called *inguiuka*, which is taken with beer. Then the bed is turned so that the head is where the feet were. The woman wears on her neck, tied up in a piece of bark, a section of the plant from which the infusion is made. But in giving this medicine, as in many others, the doctor will say, "This medicine is not mine; it is God's; He must work in you." When another child is born, the doctor is called to give it medicine, and to shave its head. The fee is a cow; and a hoe is paid when the child reaches the age of three.

For other internal conditions, a mere enumeration must suffice. Internal pains, dysentery, diarrhœa, constipation, worms, vomiting, indigestion, and wasting diseases are all treated in similar fashion, each having its own specific drug or mixture of drugs.

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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278 Fever, if due to natural causes, is treated with the infusion of the leaves of *amafumbo;* if due to the action of the spirits, a prayer for mercy is added. *Sekema* is malaria with headache. The patient must sit in the open, where he can see the sun, and drink from a closely woven basket an infusion of *lusisigembe;* and in some cases the extracted juice of *moromoro* is put into one ear. There is a " general sickness " called *bukanye*, due to witchcraft. To neutralize the witchcraft, the whole body is washed with an infusion of *ulukanganunya*, and a drink is given made from the leaves of the *mungwina* tree. Severe burning is generally believed to be the work of the spirits if it occurs at night, and it is at night that most burns occur. The native is a heavy sleeper, and he lies with his feet stretched out towards the fire. A brand falls upon a foot, and he is burned before he has properly awakened; but it was the work of the spirits, who have now to be placated with cloth, or a goat, or a fowl. Then the burned parts are smeared with the honey of a small insect called *umunya*, and washed with the infusion of the leaves of the *kasambanya* shrub. Scalding is treated with castor oil.

Muscular pains like *ikiraso* and *ilyuru*, which are probably pneumonia and rheumatism, are treated first as due to natural causes, and if this fails, witchcraft is assumed to be the cause, and steps taken accordingly. Prayer is offered, if the following can be called prayer:

" You *kiraso*, if you have come from God, the medicine will cure you. If you have been sent by

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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men, are not they also flesh? They fail, they die; 757 ●
but first they kill us. Let this disease fly away 278
from me."

An infusion of the roots of *indobo* tree already mentioned, is now given to the patient.

Diseases of the eyes, ears, teeth, gums are also treated. A list would be tedious, and a detailed statement there is no space for. Enough to say that a person qualified for the task could write a good-sized book on the subject of native medicine. There are, however, still some diseases and practices of which some brief account must be given.

Snake bite. Naturally in a land where snakes are numerous, antidotes are in use, and are claimed to be successful. The roots of *kisongora* infused and drunk, are said to be a sure remedy, if taken in time. A rich man, however, would not be advised to take this alone, for his riches bring him under suspicion of being a sorcerer, and the snake may have bitten him by command of his jealous fellow-sorcerers. To overcome this an incantation must be used.

"May you be defeated! The goods I have, I stole from no man. They are my own. This is true, as God sees me."

Another remedy is the root of *kitumbo*, the infusion mixed with soot from the inside of the house. The mixture must be drunk outside, for if the patient goes in he will die. A method favoured by other doctors is to hold the part bitten over a fire to which has been added the leaves of the *unkwesi*, a large tree. Presently

757 the fang will drop out, and the man will be saved!
278 There are men living near me who claim to have seen this being done.

844 The birth of children is accompanied by loving care, gross superstition, and much medical treatment, useful or otherwise. All women at that time are given a drink of *indobo* leaves, pounded and mixed with water. If the placenta has not come away satisfactorily, castor oil is given. And if pain supervenes, the bark of *indobo* is again given, pounded and mixed with water. For a child weak at birth, roots of *unsuba* and *mungwina* are taken, pounded, mixed with water, and the child is washed in the
842 mixture. Sterility in man or woman can be removed by the right drugs; and when a woman is getting on in years and wishes no more children, a mixture is in
847 use which will have the desired effect. Medicines for producing abortion are widely known, and
832 frequently used, as also are love potions.

757 Steaming is resorted to in cases of great pain or weakness. Water is cooked in a large pot, with the bark of *mparampara* added. When the pot has boiled, it is taken off the fire, and the patient, covered with a mat, kneels over it, supported if very weak, for about ten minutes. Massaging also is employed when one is very tired, the leaves of *muyoka* being pounded to give a juice for lubrication, or, as the people themselves say, to get into the body through the pores. Cupping is employed for headache and rheumatic pains. Eight cuts are made in two lines, on each side of the head; a small horn is put over the cuts; a

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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vacuum is created by suction, and the hole in the horn closed with beeswax. In about a quarter of an hour the cup is removed. Pain in the eyes, legs, back, is so treated.

Smallpox, the most dreaded of all scourges, has already been dealt with under "Worship" and "Witchcraft," and all that is here necessary is to indicate what is done for the cure of patients. An infusion made from the roots of *ikanganunya* and *sambwe* is given to drink, and the body is washed with the same mixture. The pustules are opened with the thorns of *unsuba*. But more important than the medicine is a clear conscience in the patient; and prayer to the spirits and confession of sins must be made before the medicine is administered. The father, in the presence of all the family, says: "My son has smallpox; let us be at peace; whoever has anything against him, let him declare it." Any matters against the sick man are now inquired into. It may be a debt, or a quarrel, or a charge of impudence in the case of a boy. The sick man is also questioned, and makes his confession, usually of misconduct with girls, who are forbidden to approach the house. If married women are involved, neither they nor their husbands may come near. A prayer for the removal of the disease is now offered by the family representative, at the door of the house in which the patient lies, and the prayer is accompanied by the usual squirting of water from the mouth, which is never omitted. The medicine may now be administered to the sick man. A prophylactic is used by all the other members of the

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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755 family who have not had smallpox, but it is evidently not greatly trusted, for it is used with the formula, "Protection against smallpox is unknown, but let us try. If God and the spirits agree we shall be safe." After this ceremony there must be no quarrelling. Peace in the village is a condition of immunity from the disease.

757 In a considerable number of cases incisions are made in the skin, and powdered medicine rubbed in. This is done for general pains, rheumatism, backache, elephantiasis, toothache, spleen. For toothache, if the pain is in the right side of the face, incisions are made between the great and second toes of the left foot, and the powder rubbed in; if the pain is in the left, the powder goes in the same way into the right foot.

763 *Post mortems* are still conducted in all cases where there is any doubt as to the cause of death. Until quite recently no one was buried without examination, and in some districts that is still the case. The operation is performed at the graveside by the friends of the dead man, the actual operator being as a rule a near relative. If a black substance is found in the gall-bladder, a diviner is consulted, to find out who brought on the disease. If the examination of the gall-bladder yields no result, the heart is examined. Ulcers on that organ indicate witchcraft as the cause of death; fat indicates leprosy. Next, the intestines are examined; if *mafira* (pus) is found there it indicates a kind of rheumatism accompanied with boils. The examination being over, the parts removed are

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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trouble is that Mwaipopo (the chief 116) is getting old. . . .' Here Kasitile suggested two different causes for the scarcity in the country: (*a*) the negligence of the priests, and (*b*) the senility of the chief. In the old days Mwaipopo would have been smothered, as Angombwike explained (*vide supra*, p. 63).

On the 9th, Kasitile, much troubled by his cough at night, expressed a great desire for the return of the missionary nurse to Kabembe hospital. 'She is killing us by her absence, the black people don't know anything about these things, only the Europeans. Why, I went there and the dresser just gave me an injection without taking my temperature—no European ever does that.'

The following day he sent off his sons with 10 c. to inquire about his case from a diviner. The diviner said: 'The wives at his home are gossiping to other people about their husband. People want the husband's body to be light. It is not Jane, because she is his favourite, but the others.' Kasitile said:

> I shan't do anything, I said 'Let's leave it.' I am still in Butola [the village to which he moved for safety]. Mwakyonde is giving me medicine for my disease. It drives out the cold which is in my body. Yes, the cold is the breath of the witches coming to throttle me—it's due to my wives' gossip. But it started as a quarrel with other people [non-relatives] first. One day I went to drink beer in Bujege and that night I fell sick; that is how it began. Men are complaining because I, a chief, a senior, do not cook food for them. They throttle me on that account. They say: 'Let us see whether he is really a chief, a senior!' But others say: 'He has done no wrong.' Yes, the sickness took me on the way home from the beer. Perhaps Kyala asked: 'What has he done?' and found I had done no wrong. If there had not been a Kyala who saves us I would have been dead.
>
> When I consulted a diviner he struck a spear and looked along it, then he said: 'The disease now is from his wives—the earlier attack was from men, but this one is from his wives. When they gather at the hearth they say: "Come hither, we see him where he sleeps." '

'Are the wives witches?' we asked.
Kasitile replied:

> Yes. They say: 'There is a favourite, we are not beloved.' If a man's wives are good the witches can get into the house, but their cold breath dissipates quickly; you are given medicine and recover quickly; but if the wives are bad they gather together the medicine and press it down, so that it is powerless. One of my wives is very bad, her lineage is bad, it is she who calls to her aid the heavy ones, the witches. The

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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(*b*) MEDICINES AND MORALITY

Doctors classify most of their medicines in terms of the supposed mystical causes of disease, and the determining factor in diagnosis is what quarrels have occurred in the patient's circle of kinsmen and friends, or what wrongdoing he has on his conscience. The medicines mentioned to us by various doctors were for treatment of sickness caused by 'the breath of men', by sorcery, by vengeance magic, by the protective medicine put on wives, by the anger of the shades or living senior relatives, by incest, by spearing or binding with ropes,[1] or abnormal birth. Only a few of the medicines listed were for the treatment of observable symptoms such as fever, too frequent periods, or swelling after snake-bite, rather than the supposed mystical cause.

The emphasis on discovering the mystical cause and counteracting it was shown very clearly when Godfrey Wilson accompanied Mwakyonde, the doctor, to the home of a patient, a young man so weak that he could not lift a limb. Mwakyonde spent two minutes examining him, and provided leaves with which he was poulticed, and a medicine which was rubbed into cuts made all over his body, but the greater part of the day was devoted to discussing the quarrel between kinsmen, from which his illness was thought to have arisen, to persuading the kinsmen to 'speak out', and to preparing and administering a medicine which would cause the death of any one of them who was working sorcery against another.

Medicine for the treatment of a disease is held to be ineffective —at the best a temporary palliative—unless the underlying cause is discovered and dealt with. For example, doctors spoke of possessing a medicine against *ilyepa*, the disease caused by a kinsman to whom a debt in cattle is due, but it is not effective alone. 'The wrongdoer drinks medicine and pays his kinsman. He must pay, for though the medicine may cure him temporarily the disease will come again if he does not pay his debt.'

The ultimate cause of disease is believed to be friction in social relationships—a breach in moral law—and so the study of medicines takes us directly to problems of morality. There is a deep-rooted conviction that medicines will not be effective if there is quarrelling in the family which uses them. This applies not only to medicines used in sickness, but also to those for protection

[1] *op. cit.*, pp. 172-9.

13: Lehmann E-5 (1939)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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for research, I am very grateful for a grant from the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures[2] which enabled me to start my ethnographical field work among these people. I wish also to express my thanks to the Government of the Tanganyika Territory, the Provincial Commissioner of Mbeya, and the District Officer of Tukuyu for all the courtesy I received during my work.

1. My first step, after my arrival at Katumba near Masoko, was to pay a visit to Mwamasika, the chief *(omalafyale)*[3] of the village and

The chief Wwamasika with his councillors.

of those adjacent. On the open place near his hut he welcomed me in company with his *amafumu*[4], the influential men of his villages. My attendant, the interpreter and I were asked to sit on chairs, while the *amafumu* sat down on mats or on large banana leaves on the ground; but the chief remained standing. I explained the aim of my visit, and that I would be very glad of his support. The chief promised it, and he kept his promise excellently. On other occasions the chief also sat on a chair. In the afternoon of the first day I sent to the chief some presents. The following he made a return in form of food. This exchange of gifts is named *ukubonola*, handing over the gift.

2. In a small village belonging to Mwamasika's chieftainship was the residence of a medicine man, to whom I paid a visit as soon as I could. When I met him he was being consulted by a sick male person who had a stomach complaint *(agaju)*. After some negotiations he allowed me

[2] Cf. Africa. Vol. XI, p. 497.
[3] Cf. Wilson, Introduction, p. 283; Land Rights, p. 44.
[4] Cf. Wilson, Land Rights, p. 13. W. translates *ulifumu (olifumu)* by „great commoner", Introduction, p. 276, 282.

13:Lehmann E-5 (1939) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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The chief Wwamasika and his family after he had received from me my old "Klepper-Mantle" as a gift.

to enter his hut, where the patient was sitting on the ground with his back to the wall. To heal his patient of the pains, the doctor made some small incisions in his skin near the stomach by means of a triangular-shaped knife, and then he rubbed in the incisions a thick black juice taken from the horn of an antelope (the horn was called *kapembe*, pl. *ulupembe*). The juice was prepared from different roots and herbs as a medicine against stomach pains. In the horn were certain divisions for other medicines, and in each of these divisions was stuck a small (black) stick for removing the specific medicine from it. After this treatment the patient declared that he felt severe pains in the region of his stomach. I asked the doctor for some of his medicines, but he was unwilling to give me anything. Then I promised to bring him next day some European medicines hoping to get in exchange some of his medicaments.

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The following morning I returned. On this occasion I did acquire some of his medicines in exchange for various European tablets, especially as he was most fascinated with the kaliumpermanganatum[1] of which I gave him a few crystals, explaining to him the use and the dose; when I dissolved some of the crystals before his eyes, it probably seemed to him to be a mystical process. Among the medicines I received then from him was a medicine for luck, called *kwarusako*. Some of the inhabitants of the village, who had meantime appeared, were very unwilling for him to give me this medicine, and maintained that I would take with me all the luck of the village.

[777]

On this second visit to the medicine-man, there was again a patient present, and I wanted to take a photograph of the scene because it was

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[1] [i.e., $KMnO_4$. – Analyst]